

Administration of Barack Obama, 2014

**Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Global Deployment of United States
Combat-Equipped Armed Forces**

December 11, 2014

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am providing this supplemental consolidated report, prepared by my Administration and consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93–148), as part of my efforts to keep the Congress informed about deployments of U.S. Armed Forces equipped for combat.

***MILITARY OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM
OBJECTIVES***

In furtherance of U.S. counterterrorism efforts, the United States continues to work with partners around the globe, with a particular focus on the U.S. Central Command's and U.S. Africa Command's areas of responsibility. In this context, the United States has deployed U.S. combat-equipped forces to enhance the counterterrorism capabilities and support the counterterrorism operations of our friends and allies, including special operations and other forces for sensitive operations in various locations around the world. Specific information about counterterrorism deployments to select countries is provided below, and a classified annex to this report provides further information.

***Military Operations Against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and Associated Forces and in
Support of Related U.S. Counterterrorism Objectives***

Since October 7, 2001, the United States has conducted combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces. In support of these and other overseas operations, the United States has deployed combat-equipped forces to a number of locations in the U.S. Central, Pacific, European, Southern, and Africa Command areas of operation. Such operations and deployments have been reported previously, consistent with Public Law 107–40 and the War Powers Resolution, and operations and deployments remain ongoing. These operations, which the United States has carried out with the assistance of numerous international partners, have been successful in seriously degrading al-Qa'ida's capabilities and brought an end to the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan. If necessary, in response to this terrorist threat, I will direct additional measures to protect U.S. citizens and interests. It is not possible to know at this time the precise scope or the duration of the deployments of U.S. Armed Forces necessary to counter this terrorist threat to the United States.

Afghanistan. United States Armed Forces have transitioned the lead for security to Afghan security forces while striking significant blows against al-Qa'ida's leadership and preventing Afghanistan from being used to launch attacks against our homeland. On May 27, 2014, I announced my decision to end the U.S. combat mission in Afghanistan at the end of 2014, and to maintain a limited number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan beyond the end of 2014. These forces in Afghanistan will be for the purposes of training, advising, and assisting Afghan forces and supporting counterterrorism operations against the remnants of al-Qa'ida.

The U.N. Security Council most recently extended its authorization of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan until December 31, 2014, in U.N. Security Council Resolution 2120 (October 10, 2013). The mission of ISAF, under North Atlantic

Treaty Organization (NATO) command and in partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, is to reduce the capability and will of the insurgency, support the growth in capacity and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), and facilitate improvements in governance and socio-economic development in order to provide a secure environment for sustainable stability. For the last few years, the ISAF campaign has focused on preparing the ANSF for full security transition in 2014.

Since June 2013, the ANSF have been in the lead for security nationwide and have been conducting the overwhelming majority of operations. ISAF is now in support of the ANSF, and the only unilateral operations that ISAF conducts are in support of its own security, sustainment, and redeployment. During the remainder of its campaign, ISAF will continue to focus on developing the sustainability of the ANSF at the corps and ministerial levels. The security transition process—as agreed to at the 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon and reaffirmed at the 2012 NATO Summit in Chicago—remains on track, and the ANSF are expected to assume full responsibility for security across the whole of Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

Following the completion of the ISAF mission at the end of 2014, the mission to help train, advise, and assist the ANSF and Afghan ministries and institutions will continue through the follow-on NATO-led Resolute Support Mission.

Today, there are approximately 15,000 U.S. forces in Afghanistan. The U.S. Armed Forces are on track to draw down to a Force Management Level of 9,800 by early 2015. (The actual number of U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan may exceed this Force Management Level due to, for example, overlap during rotations of units and the continued presence of forces with the single mission of supporting the retrograde of U.S. equipment, both of which are excluded from counting against the Force Management Level.) By the end of 2016, U.S. forces would draw down to a small presence at our embassy in Kabul, focusing primarily on security assistance activities. The United States would continue to work with our Afghan partners to pursue the remnants of al-Qa'ida and more broadly to work with our partners in the region to continue to detect and disrupt extremist threats.

As I noted in my report of June 12, 2014, on March 25, 2013, the United States signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Government of Afghanistan under which the United States transferred all Afghan nationals detained by U.S. forces in Afghanistan to the custody and control of the Afghan government. Pursuant to the MOU, any new Afghan detainees are to be transferred to Afghan custody and control within 96 hours after capture. United States forces in Afghanistan continue to detain a small number of third-country nationals under the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (Public Law 107–40), as informed by the law of war.

Iraq and Syria. In order to provide support and security to U.S. personnel and the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and as part of a comprehensive strategy to degrade and ultimately defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), I authorized, earlier this year, the deployment of U.S. Armed Forces to Iraq. These deployments of U.S. forces, which I reported to the Congress in a series of reports in recent months, are conducting coordination with Iraqi forces and providing training, communications support, intelligence support, and other support to select elements of the Iraqi security forces, including Kurdish Peshmerga forces. Additionally, these forces are conducting a systematic campaign of airstrikes and other necessary actions against ISIL forces in Iraq and Syria and airstrikes against elements of al-Qa'ida known as the Khorasan Group in Syria. The Force Management Level for U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq currently is 3,100 personnel.

These actions are being undertaken in coordination with and at the request of the Government of Iraq and in conjunction with coalition partners.

Somalia. In Somalia, a small contingent of U.S. military personnel, including some special operations forces, has worked to counter the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida and associated elements of al-Shabaab. On September 1, 2014, U.S. forces conducted an airstrike in Somalia that killed the emir of the terrorist group al-Shabaab, Ahmed Abdi al-Muhammad, also known as Ahmed Godane.

Yemen. The U.S. military has also been working closely with the Government of Yemen to operationally dismantle and ultimately eliminate the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the most active and dangerous affiliate of al-Qa'ida today. Our joint efforts have resulted in direct action against a limited number of AQAP operatives and senior leaders in that country who posed a terrorist threat to the United States and our interests.

Cuba. Combat-equipped forces, deployed since January 2002 to the Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, continue to conduct humane and secure detention operations for the 142 detainees at Guantanamo Bay under the authority provided by the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (Public Law 107-40), as informed by the law of war.

Military Operations in Niger in Support of U.S. Counterterrorism Objectives

As indicated in my report of December 13, 2013, U.S. military personnel in Niger continue to provide support for intelligence collection and to facilitate intelligence sharing with French forces conducting operations in the Sahel and with other partners in the region. The total number of U.S. military personnel deployed to Niger is approximately 200.

Military Operations in Chad in Support of Efforts to Locate Schoolgirls Kidnapped in Nigeria

The deployment of U.S. military personnel to Chad to support U.S. intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations has concluded. A small number of U.S. military personnel remain deployed to Chad for security cooperation activities.

MILITARY OPERATIONS RELATED TO THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY

In October and November 2011, U.S. military personnel with appropriate combat equipment initially deployed to Uganda to serve as advisors to regional forces of the African Union Regional Task Force (AU-RTF) that are working to apprehend or remove Joseph Kony and other senior Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leaders from the battlefield, and to protect local populations. United States forces deployed to central Africa also operate and maintain U.S. aircraft providing air mobility support to foreign partner forces. The aircraft and personnel providing the enhanced air mobility support will deploy to the LRA-affected areas of central Africa episodically, as they are available, consistent with other Department of Defense requirements. During these deployments, the number of U.S. military personnel deployed to the central Africa region, including advisors deployed for this mission and personnel providing logistical and support functions to this and other missions, will fluctuate at a level up to approximately 300.

United States forces are working with select partner nation forces of the AU-RTF to enhance cooperation, information-sharing and synchronization, operational planning, and overall effectiveness. These forces, however, will not engage LRA forces except in self-defense. It is in the U.S. national security interest to help our regional partners in Africa to develop their capability to address threats to regional peace and security, including the threat posed by the

LRA. The United States is pursuing a comprehensive strategy to help the governments and people of this region in their efforts to end the threat posed by the LRA and to address the impact of the LRA's atrocities.

Additional information about military operations related to the Lord's Resistance Army is provided in the classified annex.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN EGYPT

Approximately 700 military personnel are assigned to the U.S. contingent of the Multinational Force and Observers, which have been present in Egypt since 1981.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN JORDAN

As initially detailed in my report of June 21, 2013, at the request of the Government of Jordan, U.S. Armed Forces elements, including Patriot missile systems, fighter aircraft, and related support, command, control, and communications personnel and systems, are deployed to Jordan to support the security of Jordan and promote regional stability. The total number of U.S. forces in Jordan is approximately 1,700 U.S. military personnel. These forces will remain in Jordan, in full coordination with the Government of Jordan, until the security situation becomes such that they are no longer needed.

U.S./NATO OPERATIONS IN KOSOVO

The U.N. Security Council authorized Member States to establish a NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) in Resolution 1244 on June 10, 1999. The original mission of KFOR was to monitor, verify, and, when necessary, enforce compliance with the Military Technical Agreement between NATO and the then-Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (now Serbia), while maintaining a safe and secure environment. Today, KFOR deters renewed hostilities in cooperation with local authorities, bilateral partners, and international institutions. The principal military tasks of KFOR forces are to help maintain a safe and secure environment and to ensure freedom of movement throughout Kosovo. The U.S. contribution to KFOR is approximately 700 U.S. military personnel out of the total strength of approximately 4,600 personnel.

REGIONAL SECURITY OPERATIONS

As stated in my report of June 12, 2014, U.S. Armed Forces remain in Yemen to support the security of U.S. personnel. These forces will remain deployed, in full coordination with the respective host governments, until the security situation no longer requires them.

As I noted in my report of July 27, 2014, during the period July 25–26, embassy personnel and the U.S. forces supporting their security were relocated outside Libya. To support the safe departure of the embassy staff from Libya over land through Tunisia, U.S. military aircraft and additional military personnel entered Libya and Tunisia; those forces also departed Libya.

As I noted in my report of September 11, 2014, U.S. Armed Forces deployed to the Central African Republic to support the resumption of the activities of the U.S. Embassy in Bangui. The force is expected to remain in the Central African Republic until it is replaced by an augmented U.S. Security Guard Detachment and additional Department of State civilian security personnel as the security situation allows.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in all of these operations pursuant to my constitutional and statutory authority as Commander in Chief (including the authority to carry out Public Law 107–40 and other statutes), and as Chief Executive, as well as my

constitutional and statutory authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States. Officials of my Administration and I communicate regularly with the leadership and other Members of Congress with regard to these deployments, and we will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John A. Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Patrick J. Leahy, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Categories: Communications to Congress : Combat-equipped U.S. Armed Forces, letter on global deployment.

Names: Kony, Joseph.

Subjects: Afghanistan : Afghan military and security forces; Afghanistan : Detention facilities, transfer of responsibility to Afghan forces; Afghanistan : International Security Assistance Force; Afghanistan : NATO, role; Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Africa : African Union :: Peacekeeping efforts; Africa : Central Africa, Lord's Resistance Army insurgent group; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Deployment; Chad, U.S. military detachment; Cuba : Guantanamo Bay, U.S. Naval Base :: Detention of alleged terrorists; Egypt : U.S. military detachment; Foreign policy, U.S. : Diplomatic security, strengthening efforts; Iraq : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Iraq : Security cooperation with U.S.; Jordan : Security cooperation with U.S.; Kosovo : KFOR international security force; Niger, U.S. military detachment; Somalia : U.S. military detachment; Syria : U.S. airstrikes; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Terrorism : al-Shabaab terrorist group; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Yemen : Security cooperation with U.S.; Yemen : Suspected terrorist safe havens.

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